

Message Text

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53

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 IO-13 PM-07 L-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 AID-20

PC-04 RSR-01 /122 W

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R 291208Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY FORT LAMY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6929

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NIAMES

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L FORT LAMY 1418

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CD

SUBJ: CHAD'S RETURN TO CULTURAL SOURCES

1. PRESIDENT TOMBALBAYE'S SERIOUSNESS ABOUT CHAD'S CULTURAL
REVOLUTION AND THE COUNTRY'S NEED TO RETURN TO ITS TRADITIONAL
SOURCES WAS DEMONSTRATED BY THE OBLIGATORY SUBMISSION OF
UNINITIATED HIGH-LEVEL GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL TO "YONDOH", THE
TRIBAL RITE USUALLY IMPOSED ON BOYS AT PUBERTY. WITHOUT WARNING

EARLIER THIS MONTH PRESIDENT ROUNDED UP THOSE OFFICIALS WHO HAD
NOT EXPERIENCED YONDOH AND SENT THEM TO SARH AND NEIGHBORING
TOWNS, INCLUDING BESSADA, HIS OWN HOME. THERE MASKED,
DRESSED IN SKINS AND CARRYING TRADITIONAL WEAPONS, THE INITIATES
WERE TO RENEW TIES TO THEIR AFRICAN HERITAGE. WE DO NOT KNOW
IF SCARIFICATION HAS ALSO BEEN IMPOSED. IT IS NORMALLY AN
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IMPORTANT PART OF THE INITIATION.

2. PRESIDENT'S LANGUAGE IN MAJOR ADDRESS AT AUG 27 OPENING OF NATIONAL CONGRESS, AT WHICH PPT WAS DISSOLVED, SUGGESTS THAT ALL CHRISTIAN FIRST NAMES MUST BE CHANGED. EDITOR OF OFFICIAL INFOTCHAD SIGNED HIS LATEST EDITORIAL WITH NEW AFRICAN NAME. IN ADDITION, ALL EUROPEAN STREET, TOWN AND CITY NAMES, EXCEPT CHARLES DE GAULLE AND FELIX EBOUE--THE LATTER THE GOVERNOR GENERAL WHO UNHESITATINGLY ALIGNED CHAD WITH FREE FRANCE IN WWII--WILL BE CHANGED.

3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SIMILARITIES TO ZAIRE'S CAMPAIGN FOR "AUTHENTICITY", PRESIDENT TOMBALBAYE'S APPLICATION OF CULTURAL REVOLUTION TO QUESTION OF STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT IS DIFFERENT. WHILE MOBUTU'S MPR WAGES WAR AGAINST TRIBALISM AND SEEKS TO BREAK OR CURB POWER OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS, TOMBALBAYE APPEARS READY TO RESTORE MORE OF THEIR POWERS EVEN AT THE PRICE OF DECENTRALIZATION. IT IS CLEAR THAT CHAD IS NOW MOVING TOWARD MAJOR REJECTION OF FRENCH VALUES AND HAS BEGUN SEARCH FOR ITS AFRICAN CHARACTER. ON OF MOST DIFFICULT TASKS WILL BE TO DEFINE "TCHADITUDE" IN COUNTRY OF SUCH DIVERSE LOCAL SOCIETIES. COMMON DENOMINATOR FOR TOUBOUS, SARAS, BAGUIRMANS AND KOTOKOS WILL NOT BE EASILY FOUND.
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